

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 IO-13 /092 W

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R 081444Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 132

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY SANA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, ET

SUBJECT: COMMISSION TO ASSIST IN REHABILITATION AND RESETTLEMENT OF
ERITREAN REFUGEES IS ESTABLISHED

1. ACCORDING TO PRESS, EPMG ON JULY 7 ISSUED PROBLAMATION ESTABLISHING SPECIAL ERITREAN REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION TO ASSIST IN REHABILITATION AND RESETTLEMENT OF ERITREAN REFUGEES. PROCLAMATION CONSISTS OF 15 ARTICLES DELIMITING THE POWERS OF THE COMMISSION, WHICH INCLUDE: MAKING CONTACTS WITH FOREIGN STATES WITH A VIEW OF PLANNING THE RETURN OF REFUGEES WHO FLED ERITREA DUE TO ADVERSE CONDITIONS THERE; ASSISTING IN REHABILITATION OF REFUGEES AND IN RESTORING LOST

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PROPERTY TO THEM; ARRANGING FOR EMPLOYMENT OR EDUCATIONAL FA-

CILITIES FOR RETURNING REFUGEES; "FINDING OUT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED (*) AND PRESENTING TO THE GOVERNMENT A LIST OF SUCH PRISONERS WITH A RECOMMENDATION FOR THEIR RELEASE"; "STUDYING THE CASES OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT OR DEATH AND RECOMMENDING TO THE GOVERNMENT THEIR RELEASE OR A REDUCTION IN SENTENCE"? PROVIDING NECESSARY CARE AND ASSISTANCE TO THOSE WHO HAVE BECOME PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY DISABLED; AND LASTLY, THE POWER TO REQUIRE ANY PERSON TO APPEAR AND GIVE TESTIMONY UNDER OATH. THE PROCLAMATION DESCRIBES "ADVERSE CONDITIONS" AS THE DISRUPTION OF LAW AND ORDER ORIGINATING "FROM POLITICAL DISSENSION IN THE REGION."

2. COMMISSION COMPOSED OF A COMMISSIONER, A FIRST DEPUTY/ COMMISSIONER, AND THREE DEPUTY COMMISSIONERS, ALL OF WHOM TO BE APPOINTED BY THE HEAD OF STATE. COMMISSION SHALL HAVE "SEPARATE LEGAL IDENTITY" AND BE RESPONSIBLE TO THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ERITREAN REGION. PROCLAMATION EMPOWERS COMMISSION TO MAKE DIRECT CONTACTS WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PROVIDES FOR GOVERNMENT FUNDING.

3. IN ACCOMPANYING PRESS ARTICLE ON SPECIAL COMMISSION, LENGTHY REFERENCE IS MADE TO MAY 16 ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION PROGRAM WHICH PROVIDES FOR REGIONAL AUTONOMY WITH PRIORITY IMPLEMENTATION GIVEN TO THE ERITREA REGION. FULL TEXT OF PROCLAMATION AND ACCOMPANYING STATEMENT WILL BE POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT AND ASMARA.

4. COMMENT: THIS IS FIRST TIME WE HAVE SEEN ERITREAN PROBLEM SO EXPLICITLY ATTRIBUTED TO "POLITICAL DISSENSION". MOREOVER, WE ARE STRUCK BY BROAD POWERS APPARENTLY GIVEN TO "SPECIAL ERITREA REGION AFFAIRS COMMISSION". Juxtaposition of clarifying statement promising that priority will be given to implementation of regional autonomy in ERITREA also noteworthy. We shall have to await the full text of the proclamation and further developments to ascertain if this new commission is intended to be a step towards more meaningful self-government for ERITREA.

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